

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0908

October 6, 2023

The Honorable Denis McDonough
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Secretary McDonough:

We write for clarification on the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) policy for veterans who have injuries resulting from receiving the COVID-19 vaccine while in service. As you are aware, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) required all service members to be vaccinated against COVID-19. Many service members, despite hesitations against receiving the vaccine, chose to be vaccinated to continue their service to our country. While the DoD's vaccine mandate has been repealed as part of the *James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023*, the VA has an important role to play in providing benefits and healthcare for service members who are facing health impacts that resulted from the vaccine.

Thousands of service members were discharged from service as a result of refusing to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Yet, some U.S. service members received the vaccine to maintain their service and have since experienced lasting health impacts as a result. If our government is asking service members to receive a vaccine, we must be cognizant that there will be unintended side effects that may cause lifelong impacts on their health. We must keep our promise to support our service members, including ensuring those who come to the VA for help with COVID-19 vaccine injuries are justly compensated and receive the care that they deserve.

For years, the VA has evaluated the health effects of certain vaccinations that veterans received during their service, and have expressed concern with certain health impacts arising from these vaccinations.¹ The agency has also provided several resources to veterans seeking the COVID-19 vaccination, but no clear information about how to support members who are injured as a result of the vaccine. Given the high rate of service members who have been vaccinated against COVID-19 under DoD's mandate, we request information as to how the VA is considering vaccine-related injuries in determining VA benefits and disability claims.

In order to better serve our constituents who may be seeking help from the VA related to injuries related to COVID-19 vaccines they received while a member of the Armed Forces, we request the following information:

1. What is the VA's process for considering COVID-19 vaccine injuries for disability claims?

¹ <https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/vaccinations-medications.asp>

2. Does the VA consider COVID-19 vaccine injuries as service-related if the service member received the vaccine during service?
3. Has the VA investigated the health effects of COVID-19 vaccine injuries?
4. What resources does the VA provide service members who are concerned that a COVID-19 vaccination led to their injury?

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

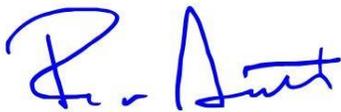
Sincerely,



Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator



Tom Cotton
U.S. Senator



Rick Scott
U.S. Senator



Steve Daines
U.S. Senator



Mike Braun
U.S. Senator



Ted Cruz
U.S. Senator